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Author(s): L. V. Grinsell

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THE FOLKLORE OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MONUMENTS

BY L. V. GRINSELL

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February, 1947*

Introduction

IN its narrower sense, the folklore of ancient monuments may be said to mean the study of the beliefs and superstitions regarding them which are or used to be held by the peasant population in their vicinity.

In its wider sense, and that is the sense in which it will be used in this paper, the folklore of ancient monuments can be said to be the study of the later history of those monuments; that is to say, the study of everything of any significance that has occurred in connection with them from shortly after the period of their construction until the present day.

It is fortunate that many of the ancient Egyptian monuments have been the subject of written records, whether in Egyptian hieroglyphs, hieratic, demotic, Greek, Coptic, Arabic, or western European languages, ever since they were erected; material is therefore available for studying the growth and change in their popular traditions.

The method to be adopted in this paper is to begin with the monuments of earliest date, and describe their associated traditions in chronological sequence. The next earliest monuments will then be similarly discussed, and so on, until the folklore of the monuments of Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, and of the Ptolemaic period have all been summarised chronologically. Certain aspects of the subject will then be considered, and the paper will end with a statement of the conclusions which seem to follow from the evidence.

I. OLD KINGDOM

(a) *Saqqara. Step Pyramid of Djoser.* The method of building the earlier pyramids in steps was partly utilitarian but partly perhaps to symbolise the dead king's ladder to the sky, as described in the Pyramid Texts:

“ For him is a stairway laid to the sky, that he may ascend to the sky thereon ” (Pyr. 365a).

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(b) *Maidum. Pyramid of Snefru.* The following directive for finding treasure is from an Arabic treasure-seeker's guide :

"Measure the distance between the pyramid and the neighbouring brick mastaba by means of a thread which should be folded in two to get half the distance. Attack the masonry at this point and you will find a deep pit. This leads to a closed door guarded by a cow. In the breast of this animal are keys which will open the door. There you will find suspended lamps decorated with precious and brilliant stones, and cellars full of riches."¹

(c) *Giza. Pyramids of Kheops, Khephren, and Mycerinus.* The belief that the deceased king went to the future life in the morning and evening boats of the sun god Re is illustrated by the rock-hewn boats which are situated east of the pyramids of Kheops and Khephren.² Documentary evidence of this belief is contained in the Pyramid Texts, ss. 337, 341, 999, 1171, 1479, and elsewhere :

"Thou passeth the night in the evening barque ; and thou awakenest in the morning barque " (s. 1479).

"O pure one! Assume thy throne in the barque of Re, and sail thou upon the way " (s. 1171, a, b).

"May he whose face is turned behind him ferry the king across " (s. 999a).

The last quotation bears on the general subject of the ferry-boat of the dead. There is evidence of the almost unbroken continuity of the idea of the dead being ferried over a stretch of water to the next world, from Dyn. I to Dyn. XVIII-XIX and perhaps much later. A modern parallel is provided by the ferry-boat often hung up in the tombs of Moslem sheikhs,³ and the similarity of the ancient Egyptian and modern Arabic words for ferry-boat has been commented upon by Prof. P. G. Sobhy Bey.⁴

It is interesting to study the way in which the reputation of Kheops and Khephren degenerated as the centuries passed after their death. In his own lifetime, Kheops appears to have been regarded as a pious monarch who enriched the gods with statues of gold, restored the ancient temples, and built new ones.⁵ By Dyn. XVIII and probably much earlier,

¹ Kamel, Ahmed Bey. *Livre des Perles Enfouies*, 1907, p. 120.

² Grinsell, L. V., in *Antiquity*, XVII, 1943, pp. 47-50.

³ Blackman, W. S., *Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, 1927, p. 243.

⁴ Sobhy, P. G., in *Bull. Soc. d'Arch. Copte*, IV, 1938, pp. 59-70.

⁵ Maspero, G., *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt*, 1915, xxvi.

fiction was creeping into history ; and both are contained in the story of Kheops and the Magicians, which records a royal interview with a sorcerer aged 110 years. After demonstrating his prowess by cutting off the head of a goose and reciting magic spells which caused the head and body to reunite, the sorcerer caused the king some disquiet by relating to him the order of succession to the Egyptian throne after his death, referring in particular to a queen who would be delivered of triplets, each of whom would in turn become kings of Egypt.⁶

During and after the fifth century B.C., Herodotus and other Greek historians portrayed Kheops as a wicked tyrant who oppressed his people and prostituted one of his daughters in order to get stone for his pyramids ; in addition to which he is said to have banished the priests and plundered the temples.⁷ Diodorus Siculus added to this account by saying that neither Kheops nor Khephren was buried in the pyramids they built ; " for the multitude, enraged at the sufferings endured in building them, and at the many cruel and violent actions of these kings, threatened to pull their bodies to pieces and tear them insultingly from the tombs. Thus both at their death charged their relations to inter them secretly in some obscure place ".⁸

The rapacity of Kheops and Khephren was contrasted by the doings of the devout Mycerinus, whose pyramid, being much smaller, would not have entailed so much work on the part of the builders.

By the tenth century A.D. and perhaps before, the Giza pyramids had escaped from the kings of Dyn. IV to become, under Christian or Jewish influence, the Granaries of Joseph, built by him to provide against the seven years of famine.⁹

The mediaeval Arab traditions relating to the Great Pyramid are concerned mainly with the belief in treasure buried therein. Talimsani al Hanafi (fifteenth century A.D.) stated that it was opened by the Caliph Mamun (813-833 A.D.) who found therein a hoard of gold coins exactly equal in value to the sum he had spent on opening the pyramid.¹⁰ Soyuti (seventeenth century A.D.) wrote that " the treasures concealed in the pyramids were guarded by spirits, who have been frequently seen going around the buildings at daybreak and at noonday ".¹¹ Another

⁶ Erman, A., *Lit. Anc. Egyptians* (trans. Blackman), 1927, pp. 36-47.

⁷ Herodotus, *History*, II, p. 124f.

⁸ Diodorus Siculus, *History*, I, pp. 63-64.

⁹ Maspero, G., *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, 1908, pp. 170, 171.

¹⁰ Vyse, H., *Pyramids of Gizeh*, II, 1840, p. 351.

¹¹ Vyse, H., *Pyramids of Gizeh*, II, 1840, p. 358.

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Arab tradition, recorded by several writers including Maçudi, stated that the pyramids were filled with talismans, and all wonderful things, and the writings of the priests, containing all manner of wisdom concerning the various arts and sciences, to which were added goblets of glass which weighed the same whether full or empty, and objects of malleable glass. Yet other Arab traditions state that the pyramids contain books in which are described all past events and everything that is going to happen in the future.¹² Treasure-seekers' guides of Arab origin, fifteenth to seventeenth century A.D., give various directives for finding treasure in the vicinity of the pyramid of Kheops.

"Make a fumigation with tar, styrax, and wool from a black sheep, and a door giving access to a dyke enclosing four feddans will be opened to you. Make then your fumigation and jump across the dyke, then dig into the enclosed area, and you will find, at one cubit's depth or a little more, some nuggets of gold. Take all you desire, continuing the fumigation until you have finished."¹³

In his *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare appears to have been the inventor of a tradition concerning the great Pyramid:

"Thus do they, Sir; they take the flow of the Nile
By certain scales i' the pyramid; they know,
By the height, the lowness or the mean, if dearth
Or foison follow; the higher Nilus swells,
The more it promises." (Act II, Sc. vii).

This belief may have originated from the fact that about that time the Nilometer on Rhoda Island near Cairo was covered by a pyramid-shaped roof.

It remains to refer to traditions that each of the Giza pyramids possesses a spirit guardian; that of Kheops was a woman with long black hair who seduced people by her youth and beauty; that of Khephren was a young boy covered with downy hair; while that of Mycerinus was a venerable sheikh who burned perfumes and was seen walking around the pyramid at dawn and dusk.¹⁴ Other versions of these traditions have been recorded.¹⁵

The belief that the pyramids of Giza and elsewhere were built by the Djinn, or are inhabited by them, has long been current among the

¹² Vyse, H., *Pyramids of Gizeh*, II, 1840, pp. 319-363.

¹³ Kamel, Ahmed Bey, *Livre des Perles Enfouies*, 1907, p. 38.

¹⁴ Barges, J. J. L., *Trad. Orientales sur les Pyr.*, 1841, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵ Groff, W., in *Bull. de l'Inst. Égyptien*, for 1897 (1898), pp. 5-9; Vyse, H., *Pyramids of Gizeh*, II, 1840, p. 262.

Arabs. E. W. Lane wrote that he had been unable to persuade one of his Arab servants to enter the Great Pyramid because he held this idea that it harboured the Djinn.¹⁶

Finally, there is an Arab tradition that the pyramids contained statues at which perfumes and flowers were offered on certain days of the year. This belief bears a close though perhaps accidental resemblance to reality, as offerings were certainly made before statues in the temples associated with the pyramids.¹⁷

(d) *Giza. The Sphinx.* The Great Sphinx is almost certainly a colossal portrait of Khephren on a lion's body, and belongs to Dyn. IV. It is known locally as Abu'l Hol, or the Father of Terror, a name applied to numerous other ancient Egyptian statues, notably those of Ramesses II at Memphis, and those by the entrance to the temple of Luxor. The application of this name to ancient Egyptian statues is evidently an example of the gods of one religion becoming the notorieties of a succeeding religion.

Various writers including William Lithgow (1632)¹⁸, M. de Thevenot (1686),¹⁹ and Miss Amelia Edwards (1877)²⁰ have referred to the local belief that the Sphinx is an oracle which at sunrise or sunset would give answer to any questions asked of it. Suggestive in this regard are the references by Mr. George Bernard Shaw in his *Caesar and Cleopatra*.²¹

The supposed oracular property of the Sphinx may be compared with that of the statue of Amon-Re (Jupiter Amon) at Siwa Oasis, which was consulted by Alexander the Great.²²

(e) *Abu Sir. Pyramid of Sahure and Tomb of Ptah-shepses.* Abu Sir, between Giza and Saqqara, is the main necropolis of the kings and officials of Dyn. V, and among the three principal pyramids of the group is that of Sahure, near which is the tomb of Ptah-shepses who lived during his reign.

On the sixteenth day of the first month of winter in the thirtieth year of the reign of Ramesses II, a scribe named Ptahemuia went with some fellow-scribes to see the pyramids of Abu Sir, especially that of Sahure ;

¹⁶ Lane, E. W., *Manners and Customs of Mod. Eg.*, Everyman Edn., 1936, Chapter X.

¹⁷ Maspero, G., *Études de Myth. et d'Arch.*, I, 1893, pp. 77-9 ; pp. 89-91.

¹⁸ Lithgow, W., *Rare Adventures and Painefull Peregrinations*, 1632, vii, pp. 313-314.

¹⁹ Thevenot, de., *Travels into the Levant*, 1686, p. 134.

²⁰ Edwards, A., *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, I, 1877, xv.

²¹ Shaw, G. B., *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Act I.

²² Maspero, G., *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, 1908, pp. 248-253.

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the purpose of their visit was to invoke the goddess Sekhmet to grant them a life of 110 years, and Ptahemuia wrote an account of their visit on the wall of the tomb of Ptah-shepses. There was some mystic significance in the number 110, as shown by the facts that it was the supposed age of Kheops' magician Dedi, the supposed age of the Ptah-hotep who wrote the *Instructions*, and it was also the length of the *Ebers* medical papyrus.²³

(f) *Sagqara. Pyramids of Unis (Dyn. V) and the Kings of Dyn. VI.* These pyramids are all characterised by the presence on their interior walls of the hieroglyphic texts known as the Pyramid Texts, which are religious and funerary in content. They are remarkable for the way in which the figures of people, certain animals, and fishes are eliminated or mutilated, in order to deprive those signs of magic potency or evil influence in the tomb.

Figures of birds and reptiles, which were shown intact in the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom, were mutilated in many funerary texts of the Middle Kingdom.²⁴

II. MIDDLE KINGDOM

(a) *El Lisht. Pyramids of Ammenemes I and Sesostris I.* Arabic treasure-seekers' guides (fifteenth to seventeenth centuries A.D.) direct the burning of incense while digging for treasure in the vicinity of these pyramids.²⁵

(b) *Dahshur. Mastabas.* Burn incense and dig in the middle of each of seven mastabas and you will find mummies of princesses with their jewellery (Arabic treasure-seekers' guide).²⁶

(c) *Lahun. Pyramid of Sesostris II.* Expectant mothers walk round the pyramid seven times and/or carry a stone from the bottom to the top.²⁷

(d) *Biahmu. Bases of Statues of Ammenemes III.* In the base of each statue is a hole containing water; the fellahin come to the monuments when they are ill and use the water to be cured.²⁸

²³ Daressy, G., in *Bull. de l'Inst. Égypt.*, iii ser., No. 5, 1894, pp. 107-113; I am indebted to Prof. Y. Černý for more exact details of this inscription.

Goodwin, C. W., in Chabas, *Mélanges Égyptologiques*, 2nd ser., 1862-73, pp. 231-237.

²⁴ Lacau, P., *Ägyptische Zeitschrift*, LI, 1914, pp. 1-64.

²⁵ Kamel, Ahmed, *Livre des Perles Enfouies*, 1907, pp. 181, 182.

²⁶ Kamel, Ahmed, *Livre des Perles Enfouies*, 1907, pp. 42, 70.

²⁷ Blackman, W. S., *Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, 1927, p. 98f; also verbal confirmatory information from the late Mr. Rex Engelbach.

²⁸ Habachi, L., in *Annales du Service des Ant. de l'Égypte*, XL, 1940, p. 730.

III. NEW KINGDOM AND LATER

(a) *Madinet el Faiyum. Statue of Ramesses II at Arsinöe.* This statue is believed locally to possess the property of fecundity. Women lie beneath it and rub themselves against it in order to obtain children.²⁹

(b) *Memphis. Colossal Statues of Ramesses II.* These statues, which are known locally as Abu'l Hol, are said to be giant kings turned into stone for committing some great crime.³⁰ Legends of petrification are very uncommon in Egypt as compared with western Europe; but it is stated in the *Quran* (x. 88) that the treasures of the pharaohs were transformed into stone because of the pharaohs' unbelief.

(c) *Thebes. Colossi of Memnon (Amenophis III).* After the northern of the Colossi of Memnon was damaged during an earthquake in about 27 B.C., it acquired the property of emitting a musical note at sunrise, as described by Strabo and others.³¹ After it was repaired about 200 A.D., the sound was seldom or never heard; but according to Hay's diary in the Mss. Dept. of the British Museum the noise from the statue has occasionally been heard in recent times.³² It may perhaps be compared with that which can be produced from the Blowing Stone at Kingston Lisle, Berkshire.³³

(d) *Valley of the Kings—Deir el Bahri.* A tradition of an underground passage connecting these two localities was recorded by Carter.³⁴

(e) *Karnak Temples* are said to be swarming with the Djinn.³⁵

(f) *Thebes and Karnak. Hidden Treasure.*

"In circuit of Egyptian Thebes, where much hid
treasure lies,
Whose walls contain a hundred gates, of so
admired a size,
Two hundred chariots may a-front with
horse and chariot pass."

—Homer, *Iliad* (Chapman), ix.

(g) *Karnak and Luxor Temples: Procession of Barque of Amun.* Wall decorations and hieroglyphic texts on the temple of Amun at Karnak and at the temple of Luxor depict and describe the Feast of Amun in

²⁹ Verbal information from Mr. Patrick Kyan, formerly resident in locality.

³⁰ St. John, B., *Village Life in Egypt*, I, 1852, p. 172.

³¹ Strabo, *Geography*, Book XVII(1), §46.

³² Ebers, G., *Egypt*, II, 1882, pp. 271-2. Weigall, A., *Antiquities of Upper Egypt*, 1910, pp. 247-8.

³³ Grinsell, L. V., *White Horse Hill*, 1939, pp. 36-38.

³⁴ Carter and Mace, *Tomb of Tut-ankh-amen*, I, 1923, p. 64.

³⁵ Maspero, G., *Egypt: Ancient Sites and Mod. Scenes*, 1910, p. 162.

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the Apts, which took place about the middle of the Inundation period, lasting several days. The Feast included a ceremonial voyage of the barque of Amun on the Sacred Lake at Karnak, as well as a procession of the barque of Amun, accompanied by those of Mut and Khons, by river from Karnak to the temple of Luxor. The barque of Amun was described in contemporary texts as of cedar wood overlaid with silver and decorated with gold, with a golden shrine amidships.³⁶

(h) *Karnak: Legend of Golden Boat.* On certain nights, round about the date of the ancient Egyptian Feast of Amun, a golden boat is said to emerge on the Sacred Lake, full of bags of gold. According to one account it is conducted by a king in gold and a crew in silver; according to another, it has neither pilot nor rowers but guides itself slowly over the waters. The treasure may be obtained from the boat by anyone who does not break silence while doing so; but if he makes any sound, the boat vanishes.³⁷ One day "a man passing by the Sacred Lake saw the boat moored to the shore, and seized the peg to which its rope was fastened, as well as the wooden mallet used for driving the peg into the ground, which happened to be lying beside it. Immediately after he had done so, the boat disappeared from view. But he found that both peg and mallet were of gold, the sale of which made him a rich man. He is still alive, and in consequence of his discovery is one of the wealthiest fellahin in the village."³⁸

When excavations are undertaken at Karnak, the natives generally assume their object to be to find the golden boat.³⁹

(i) *Luxor. The Barque of Sidi Yusef Abu'l Haggag.* Immediately adjoining the part of Luxor temple which housed the sacred barques of Amun, Mut, and Khons, is the mosque of Abu'l Haggag (Father of Pilgrims), which houses the sacred boat of that saint. Three times a year (on the last day of the birthday festival of Abu'l Haggag, the last day of the Moulid en Nebi, and at the beginning of Ramadan) the boat is painted with blue, white, and red horizontal stripes, placed on a four wheeled wagon, and dragged through the streets of Luxor by the faithful, especially by those who claim descent from the saint.⁴⁰ Two incidents in

³⁶ Legrain, G., in *Bull. Inst. Fr. d'Arch. Orientale*, XIII, 1917, pp. 1-76; Foucart, G., in *Bull. Inst. Fr. d'Arch. Orientale*, XXIV, 1924, pp. 1-209.

³⁷ Loret, V., in *Bull. de l'Inst. Égyptien*, 1883-4, pp. 101-2.

³⁸ Sayce, A. H., in *Folk-lore*, XI, 1900, p. 386; also Maspero, G., *Egypt: Anc. Sites and Mod. Sc.*, 1910.

³⁹ Legrain, G., *Louqsor sans les Pharaons*, 1914, p. 98.

⁴⁰ Legrain, G., *Louqsor sans les Pharaons*, 1914, p. 84; also Hornell, J., "Boat Processions in Egypt", in *Man*, 1938, art. 171; and *Encyc. Rel. and Ethics*, XI, p. 473a.

this saint's life are of interest from the standpoint of folklore. He is said to have lived in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century A.D. When sent for on one occasion by the king of Egypt, he made the journey from Qeneh to Cairo, a distance of some 600 miles, with three other sheikhs in less than two days, or "in the twinkling of an eye", in a stone boat. (It will be recalled that in Cairo Museum are five stone divine boats of the New Kingdom). Remains of the stone boat are reputed to be outside the tomb of Sidi Abd er Rahim, one of his three companion sheikhs, at Qeneh.⁴¹

It is said that as Abu'l Haggag was anxious that no mosque should be built superior to his own at Luxor, he caused the arm of his architect to be removed.⁴² An identical story is told of Sultan Hasan who is supposed to have cut off the right hand of the architect of his magnificent mosque in Cairo for the same reason.

(j) *Denderah Temple: Procession of Barque of Hathor.* Wall reliefs and textual evidence show that the goddess Hathor made an annual voyage in her sacred barque to Edfu to visit Horus of Edfu. Although the present temple is Ptolemaic it stands on or near the site of other temples going back to the Old Kingdom, and the boat procession appears to date back to that period.⁴³

(k) *Qeneh: The Barque of Sheikh Abd er Rahim el Qenawi.* At Qeneh, which is on the east bank of the Nile opposite Denderah, the moulid occurs at about the same time as that of Abu'l Haggag at Luxor. Abd er Rahim was one of the three sheikhs who accompanied Abu'l Haggag from Qeneh to Cairo in the stone boat. The moulid of Abd er Rahim includes a procession of a sacred boat.⁴⁴

(l) *Denderah Temple: Tradition of Cow guarding Treasure.* The fellahin have a tradition that a cow wanders over their fields at night near the temple, and watches over buried treasure in the vicinity of the Chapel of the New Year.⁴⁵ As the temple is dedicated to Hathor the cow goddess, this legend is not without significance.

IV. THE USE OF THE TEMPLES AND TOMBS BY EARLY CHRISTIANS

Temples in the ancient Egyptian style continued to be built in the Nile Valley and Delta area through the Ptolemaic period until the first

⁴¹ Legrain, G., *Louqsor sans les Pharaons*, 1914, p. 67.

⁴² Legrain, G., *Louqsor sans les Pharaons*, 1914, p. 80.

⁴³ Baikie, J., *Egypt. Antiquities in the Nile Valley*, 1932, p. 317f.

⁴⁴ McPherson, J. W., *The Moulids of Egypt*, 1941, pp. 5 and 306.

⁴⁵ Maspero, G., *New Light on Anc. Egypt*, 1908, p. 177; Loret, V., in *Bull. de Inst. Egyptien*, 1883-4, pp. 103-5.

SUPPRESSIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF SIGNS IN FUNERARY TEXTS							
PERIOD	HUMAN BEINGS		ANIMALS BIRDS REPTILES FISHES				
	PEOPLE	HUNGER	TO INVERT	ENEMY	LION	OWL	VIPER
NON-FUNERARY TEXTS							
FUNERARY TEXTS							
DYN. V UNIS							
DYN. VI TETI							
PEPY I							
MERNERE							
PEPY II							
DYN. XII							
DYN. XVIII							

century of the Christian era. The introduction of Christianity into the Delta area was in full swing during the third century A.D., and in the latter part of the following century the emperor Theodosius the Great (379–395 A.D.) ordered the closing of the ancient temples. During this period a great deal of damage was done to the temples by the more fanatical of the early Christians. According to one writer, “the destruction and vandalism were limited only by the incapacity of a decadent people, and by the sheer mass and multitude of the monuments of their ancestors”.⁴⁶ The reliefs of gods and goddesses on the walls of the otherwise still complete temple of Edfu were hacked away with hammer and chisel, and those of many other temples shared the same fate.

After Diocletian (300–311 A.D.) issued his edict against the Christians, many of the Copts took refuge on the edge of the desert, especially in rock-cut tombs of the Middle and New Kingdoms, where they lived as anchorites, and defaced the beautiful reliefs by carving Coptic crosses over them, notably at Beni Hasan and Thebes. In other instances they covered the ancient Egyptian decorations with Coptic paintings. At least one anchorite is said to have held converse with the souls of the mummies in one of these tombs.⁴⁷

In A.D. 407, Theodosius II ordered the destruction of images in the temples, but instructed that the temple buildings be preserved for public purposes.

In A.D. 435, the patriarch Cyril transferred the bodies of the martyred saints Cyrus and John from Alexandria to the temple of Serapis at Canopus, in order to persuade the sick to leave off their devotion to Isis the Healer and have recourse to the intercession of the Christian martyrs instead.⁴⁸

During the sixth century A.D., the Copts took over many of the ancient temples and converted parts of them into churches, notably at Luxor, Karnak, Medinet Habu, Denderah, Edfu, Philae, and Nubian examples including Kalabsheh, Dakkeh, and Wady es Sebua. At the latter temple the combination of ancient Egyptian decorations and superimposed Coptic paintings produces the incongruous spectacle of Ramesses II offering flowers to St. Peter.⁴⁹

Among the most interesting results of the impact of Christianity on

⁴⁶ Worrell, W. H., *Short Account of the Copts*, 1945, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Weigall, A., *Antiquities of Upper Egypt*, 1910, p. 68.

⁴⁸ O'Leary, L., “The Destruction of Temples in Egypt”, in *Bull. Soc. d'Arch. Copte*, IV, 1938, pp. 51–57.

⁴⁹ Weigall, A., *Antiquities of Upper Egypt*, 1910, p. 536.

FOLKLORE OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MONUMENTS CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE		
PERIOD	DATE B.C.	MONUMENTS AND FOLKLORE
OLD KINGDOM	3400	GIZA PYRAMIDS SPHINX ABU SIR PYRAMIDS
FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	2600	
MIDDLE KINGDOM	2375	KHEOPS AND MAGICIANS LAHUN PYRAMID BIAHMU
SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	2000	
NEW KINGDOM	1580	SERPENT OF SAHURÉ KARNAK LUXOR MEMPHIS STATUES
LATE EGYPTIAN PERIOD	718	
PTOLEMAIC AND ROMAN PERIOD	332 30 A.D.	TRADITIONS IN HERODOTUS B A R O C U E B A R O C U E THEADELPHIA
BYZANTINE PERIOD	395	GRANARIES OF JOSEPH CHRISTIANISATION—
ARAB CONQUEST	640	ABU'L HOL ARAB TRADITIONS D J I N N A N D E F R E E T S ORACLE CURATIVE FERTILITY PROPERTY PETFICATION
MIDDLE AGES AND RECENT		
	1946	← T R E A S U R E → FERTILITY

the ancient Egyptian religion was the early type of Coptic cross, apparently derived from the Egyptian *ankh* sign.

Final Remarks and Conclusion

It is now opportune to make a few final observations on some of the motives that occur in the folklore of ancient Egyptian monuments, and to compare them with similar motives in other countries.

The belief that ancient monuments conceal hidden treasure is very widespread, and it certainly had more factual basis in Egypt than elsewhere. It is interesting to note, in countries as far apart as Scandinavia and Egypt, the idea that the treasure vanishes if silence is not observed while digging for it. The Arab treasure-seekers' guidebooks, mostly written between the fifteenth and seventeenth century A.D., are of special significance in regard to the treasure tradition.

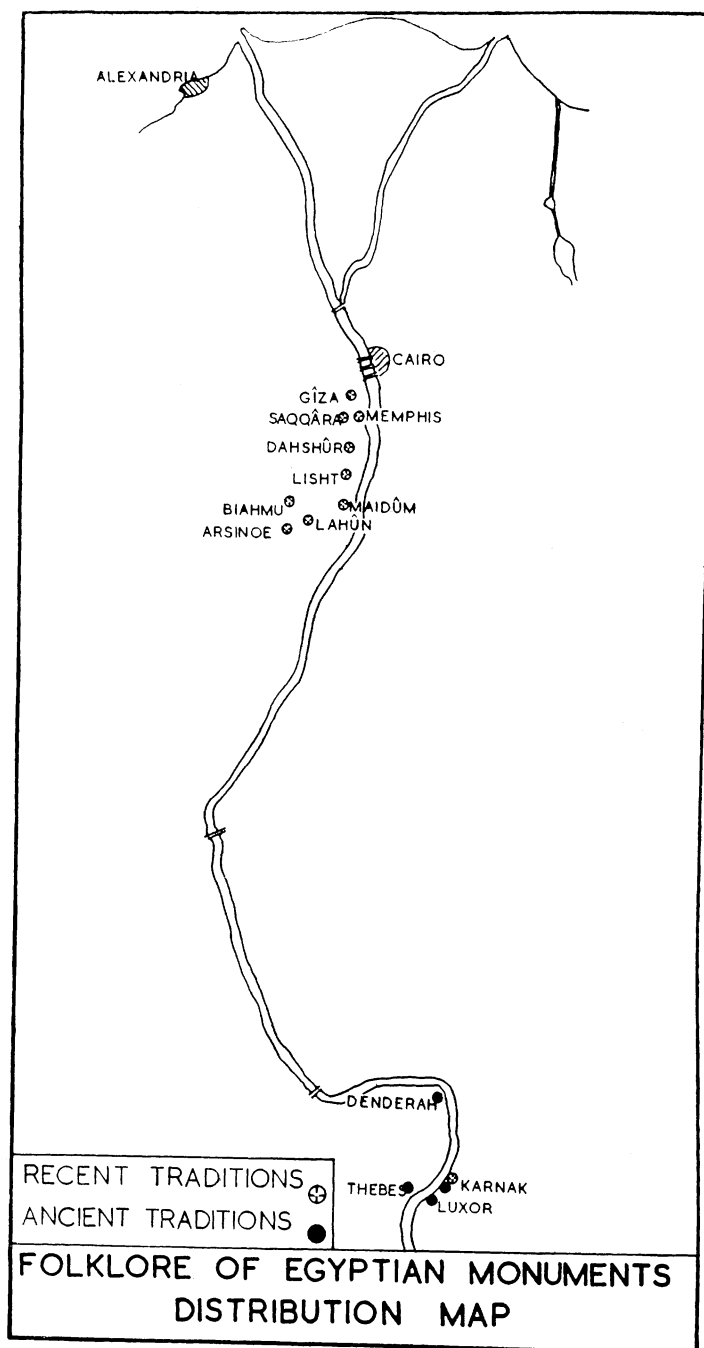
The association of the ancient Egyptian monuments with a people known as the Djinn, or the Efreets (Arabic plural Afarit) recalls the association of megaliths and barrows in western Europe with the fairies, elves, etc. The question whether fairydom owes something to the memory of an earlier civilisation has again to be considered.⁵⁰

The attribution of fertility or curative power to ancient monuments is also widespread, especially in Celtic areas. To the numerous Egyptian instances already quoted may be added an observation in regard to the smaller antiquities. The late Mr. Engelbach, a former Director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, stated that it is well known that the reason why large numbers of native women visit that museum is not to obtain mental enlightenment but to obtain children; for to move among "anticas" is considered by them to be conducive to successful childbirth. Where this belief is connected with ancient Egyptian temples, it may be borne in mind that some of those temples originally had a portion set apart for the benefit of childless women and expectant mothers (e.g. Medinet Habu; a cast of the birth house in this temple is in the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum).

With regard to the Moslem boat-processions at Luxor and Qeneh, there can I think be no reasonable doubt that we are here dealing with the survival of the ancient Egyptian boat-processions which have as it were been incorporated into the modern Arab festivals. Of the 126 moulids or Arab festivals in Egypt recently described by McPherson,⁵¹ these are

⁵⁰ Grinsell, L. V., "Folklore of Prehistoric Monuments", in *Folk-lore*, XLVIII, 1937, pp. 248-251; Westermarck, E., *Pagan Survivals in Mohammedan Civilisation*, 1933, p. 9; Lane, E. W., *Arabian Nights*, I, 1883, note 21.

⁵¹ McPherson, J. W., *The Moulids of Egypt*, 1941.



the only two examples which include boats, and each is near an Egyptian temple which had an annual boat procession.

Although not connected with ancient monuments, the following survivals of ancient Egyptian customs and superstitions among the modern Arabs may be mentioned :

- (i) the custom for professional wailing women to form part of the funeral procession ;⁵²
- (ii) the superstition that on certain days in the year it is unlucky to kindle a fire, which is recorded in ancient Egypt in the *Papyrus Sallier*,⁵³ is still current among the fellahin in the neighbourhood of Thebes ;⁵⁴
- (iii) the possible survival of the ancient Egyptian *ka* (a person's spirit or double) in the modern Arabic *karin* (masc.) or *karina* (fem.) has been discussed by Seligman and others ;⁵⁵

To conclude, I would suggest that while Lower Egypt has been too much affected by invasions and population changes to permit the survival of ancient Egyptian ideas in current folklore, the comparative isolation and security of Upper Egypt have made it possible for a few of the ancient Egyptian customs and superstitions to continue as "living fossils" among the traditions of the modern native population.

⁵² Werbrouck, M., *Les Pleureuses dans l'Égypte ancienne*, 1939 ; Blackman, W. S., *Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, 1927, pp. 293-301 and *passim*.

⁵³ Chabas, F., *Oeuvres Diverses*. V, 1909, pp. 126-235.

⁵⁴ Maspero, G., *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, 1908, p. 131.

⁵⁵ *Essays Presented to William Ridgeway*, 1913, p. 448f.

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